

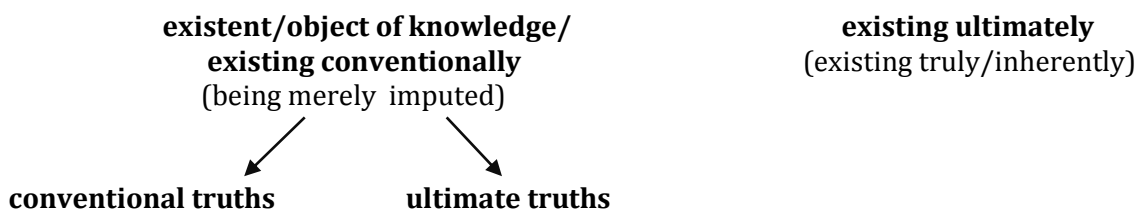
Relative to the perspective of the three beings conventional phenomena are both, conventional truths (truths for a concealer) and mere conventionalities because the word "mere" does not eliminate conventional truths but truths.

This is also explained in Lama Tsongkhapa's *Ocean of Reasoning*:

Those who have abandoned the concealer that is afflictive ignorance, do not have the concealer apprehending true existence from whose perspective [phenomena] are posited as truths. This proves that compositional phenomena are not truths from their perspective; it does not prove that compositional phenomena are not conventional truths. Therefore, since for those (from whose perspective compositional phenomena are mere conventionalities) of the two – "conventional" and "truth" – truth is not possible, the word "mere"[of the term "mere conventionality] eliminates truth. How would it eliminate conventional truth?

Moreover, when a phenomenon such as a pot is a conventional truth from the perspective of a particular awareness then the pot is necessarily also *false* from the perspective of that awareness. The reason for this is that there are two ways in which the pot is a "truth" in the context of being a "conventional truth". Either the pot is an actual truth or it is a truth from the perspective of an awareness. Since one cannot posit the pot to be an actual truth and since the only awareness, from whose perspective a pot is a truth, is ignorance, the pot can only be regarded to be false.

It is important to understand that there is a difference between a **conventional truth** and **existing conventionally**. For instance, the ultimate truth of pot is not a conventional truth but exists conventionally. It exists conventionally because it is a phenomenon that is merely imputed. Therefore, everything that exists -- conventional and ultimate truths -- exists conventionally. The opposite of existing conventionally is to **exist ultimately**. To exist ultimately means to exist truly/inherently. Since whatever exists is empty of existing truly/inherently there is nothing that exists ultimately. Therefore, object of knowledge, existent, phenomenon, and existing conventionally are equivalent.



As explained earlier, the word "conventional" (*Saṃvṛti* or *Kuen-dzob*) of the term "conventional truth" refers to a concealer ignorance that apprehends inherent existence. However "conventional" (*Saṃvṛti* or *Kuen-dzob*) of the term "existing conventionally" refers to a conceptual consciousness which imputes conventions.

Thus, even though a pot, for instance, is a conventional truth its true existence does not exist conventionally. In fact, the pot's true existence neither exists ultimately and nor conventionally.

Furthermore, Lama Tsongkhapa cites a passage from Chandrakirti's *Auto-commentary on the Supplement to the Middle Way*:

As for the nature of the mode of being of all phenomena, this is never perceived by those who possess ignorance.

This passage does not mean that those who have not overcome ignorance yet, do not realize the ultimate nature of phenomena. For instance, learner Hearer and Solitary Realizer Aryas (who are on the Hinayana path of seeing or meditation) and Bodhisattva Aryas, who are on any of the seven impure bhūmis (the first until the seventh bhūmi), they realize the ultimate nature of phenomena directly, for their meditative absorption (realizing emptiness directly) is not affected by ignorance and its imprints. When they arise from the meditative absorption, during the period of subsequent attainment, their conceptual consciousnesses and direct perceivers are affected by ignorance and its imprints and are thus unable to realize emptiness directly. However, during that period those Aryas are nevertheless able to generate conceptual consciousnesses that realize emptiness conceptually. Even ordinary beings who have not reached the Hinayana or Mahayana path of seeing yet are able to realize emptiness conceptually.

Conceptual consciousnesses are affected by ignorance and its imprints because to them the emptiness of inherent existence appears to exist inherently. However, even though the ultimate truth appears to exist inherently that does not mean that the ultimate truth is deceptive because being deceptive or non-deceptive depends on whether a phenomenon exists the way it appears to a *direct perceiver*.

EXPLAINING THE UNIQUE PRESENTATION OF AFFLICTIVE EMOTIONS [ACCORDING TO THE PRASANGIKA TENET]

English: afflictive emotion/delusion/affliction/disturbing emotion/negative emotion

Tibetan: ཉན་མོངས། - *Nyon-mong*

According to the Prasangika Madhyamika (Consequentialist Middle Way) tenet, ignorance apprehending true existence is an afflictive emotion. It is not a mere "not-knowing" but actively superimposes a characteristic onto phenomena that they do not possess. It is the first link of the twelve links of dependent arising and therefore, the root of samsara.

Further, this afflictive ignorance is of two types:

1. ignorance apprehending the **self** to exist inherently
2. ignorance apprehending **phenomena** (other than the self) to exist inherently

All other afflictive emotions such as anger, attachment, arrogance and so forth are induced by any of those two types of ignorance.

Therefore, ignorance apprehending true existence is an **afflictive obscuration**.

English: afflictive obscuration / obstruction to liberation

Tibetan: ཉན་མོངས་པའི་སྒྲིབ་པ། / ཉན་སྒྲིབ། - *Nyon-mong-pai Drib-pa* or short: *Nyon-Drib*

(*Nyon-mong-pa* = afflictive emotion/delusion/affliction/disturbing emotion/negative emotion, *Drib-pa* = obscuration/obstruction)

Afflictive obscurations are the main obstructions to liberation. They are the obstructions Hearers and Solitary Realizers must overcome in order to become Arhats, and Bodhisattvas must overcome in order to reach the eighth of the three pure Bodhisattva bhumis.

Those obstructions are basically threefold:

1. The root of Samsara: (1) ignorance apprehending the self to exist inherently, and (2) ignorance apprehending phenomena (other than the self) to exist inherently.
2. Other afflictive emotions that are induced by the root of Samsara, such as anger, attachment, jealousy, coarser types of ignorance (e.g. ignorance that apprehends a self-sufficient, substantially existent self), and so forth.
3. The seeds of the root of Samsara and of the other afflictive emotions that are induced by the root of Samsara. Those seeds refer to the *potential* of delusions to become manifest again and they exist in a person's mental continuum while the delusions lie dormant. For instance at the time when anger lies dormant in a person's mental continuum, the anger lies there in the form of a seed, i.e. in the form of a potential to manifest again as anger. The seed of anger was left by a former manifest anger that when it became non-manifest left the seed (or the potential for anger to arise again) in the person's continuum.

According to the Svatantrika Madhyamika (Autonomy Middle Way) tenet, ignorance that apprehends true existence is neither the root of Samsara nor an afflictive emotion because it is not an afflictive obscuration. It is not an afflictive obscuration because it exists in the continua of Hearers and Solitary Realizers who reached liberation. (Please note that according to the Svatantrika Madhyamika tenet Bodhisattvas reach liberation and Buddhahood at the same time.)

However, ignorance that apprehends true existence is a **cognitive obstruction** because it is an obstruction to omniscience and must therefore be overcome in order to reach the omniscient state of a Buddha.

According to this tenet, the root of samsara and thus of all the other afflictive emotions such as anger, attachment, etc. is the *ignorance that apprehends a self-sufficient, substantially existent self*.

